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# The Truth About The Alien Immigrant.

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# The Truth About the Alien Immigrant.

## I.—THE ALIEN AT HOME.

HITHERTO, the general question has been: How can we exclude the alien immigrant? But behind this question lies another: Why does the alien emigrate at all? What is it, in particular, that drives the alien to turn his little all into cash, uproot himself from the land of his birth, and tempt fortune in a distant land? The answer is, the terrors of an endless persecution which makes existence at home a torture and an impossibility.

The majority of the Jewish immigrants into this and other countries come from Russia. They are in flight from an iron persecution, designed as a means of destroying them or forcing them into exile. The late M. Pobiedonostzeff (Procurator of the Holy Synod) is said to have declared that one-third of the Jews in Russia would be forced to emigrate, another third would be compelled to accept baptism, and the remainder would be brought to the verge of starvation. This cruel programme has been persisted in with stern resolution. To begin with, the great bulk of the Jewish population has been crowded into the towns of the Pale of Settlement (i.e., the 15 Western Provinces, together with the kingdom of Poland). Now, this Jewish zone is a vast area, which might allow breathing space to the Jewish inhabitants if freely thrown open to them.

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But, under the notorious May Laws of 1882, only those who could establish a claim to reside in the small towns and villages before that year were allowed to live in the country. All the remainder were driven back pell-mell on the main body of Jews struggling in the larger towns for a morsel of bread. How the enactment worked may be seen from the fact that in 18 months after its promulgation, the Jewish population of Tschernigoff had risen from 5,000 to 20,000, so that, as Sir Wm. Evans-Gordon—the father of the Aliens Act—told the Aliens Commission, four people had to find a living where previously it was difficult enough for one to earn bread.

To aggravate the prevalent misery, the expulsions of Jews found in places outside the Jewish zone have continued with fluctuating intensity to this day. Thus, from early in 1891 till June 14, 1892, no fewer than 14,000 Jewish artisans were estimated to have been banished from Moscow. The inhumanity and brutality with which this banishment was carried out were reminiscent of the darkest days of the Spanish Inquisition; and, as has been said, these expulsions are still going on, amid circumstances of relentless cruelty. Every week a batch of figures is published showing the latest working of this policy. To make the impoverishment of the Jews doubly sure, the Government steps in and imposes all sorts of industrial disabilities. No employment paid directly or indirectly by the State is open to the Jew, and the work of the municipalities is equally closed against him.

"The cumulative effect of all these restrictions," said Sir Wm. Evans-Gordon, "is an overwhelming competition to obtain a living from the few employments which are left open. There is little work to be done, and a vast number of people to do it. The margin between life and starvation is so narrow that the least disturbance or crisis becomes a disaster and leads inevitably to increased emigration."

What the Government leaves undone in relation to Jews is completed by tyrannical provincial satraps of the type of General Tolmatcheff, the Prefect of Odessa, or by equally tyrannical local bodies. Thus the municipality of Odessa recently issued instructions to the tradesmen in the market for second-hand articles to transfer their stalls to another part of the town. The tradesmen, nearly all of whom were Jews, were extremely poor, and during the epidemics that had prevailed in the town, their families had been reduced to starvation. Yet they were ordered, without any specific reason, to change their quarters. The victims, upon whom 10,000 people were dependent, declared that it was impossible for them to raise the required funds, and that they must, in consequence of the order, give up their business.

What is more terrible, if possible, to the Jews than the physical oppression is the difficulty thrown in the way of their educating their children. A system has been introduced of limiting the number of Jews to be admitted into the educational institutions to certain percentages of the total scholars. More recently, the Jews are being excluded, to a constantly increasing extent, from the commercial schools—the irony of the situation being that many of these institutions were founded, and are largely supported, by Jewish money.

Certain categories, such as merchants of the First Guild and skilled artisans, are allowed to live outside the Pale. But the concession is of very limited value. Artisans, e.g., must have learned their trade in a Guild. But, as it is difficult for Jews to obtain admission into a Guild, the unimportance of the concession is at once obvious. The legal code against the Jews which the ingenuity of the authorities has invented fills several large volumes, and its provisions—a veritable Nessus shirt, in which the Jews are perpetually tortured—are so complicated that there

are numbers of lawyers whose sole business consists "in giving opinions as to what a Jew may or may not do." The value of such a code as an instrument of official blackmail is evident.

From time to time these methods of legalised economic asphyxiation are supplemented by more forcible measures —the pogrom or massacre, in which Jewish men, women, and children are plundered, mutilated, and murdered, amid circumstances of the most frightful barbarity. The wholesale massacres of 1905—an attempt to drown the Russian revolution in Jewish blood—will be still within the public recollection; while one cannot forget that the perpetrators of the horrors were either pardoned or had their punishments materially reduced. Only one other measure of the Russian authorities need be mentioned. Jewish women with no right of residence outside the Pale of Settlement are compelled to register themselves as prostitutes if they desire to proceed to St. Petersburg for purposes of study. This civilised Power thus sets a premium upon the immorality of its womanhood.

Under all this appalling burden of insult and ruin Jewish existence in Russia is not so much a tragedy as a miracle. Slowly, but mercilessly, the policy of Pobiedonostzeff is being worked to its predestined end. The prophecy that one-third would be brought to the verge of starvation is being gradually fulfilled: 57,000 Jewish families at Odessa, it was recently announced, had applied to the local commission for the cheap coal distributed during winter to the poorest residents. The prediction that another third would be forced to emigrate has been largely realised: during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century more than one million Jews left Russia, mostly for the United States. The prophecy that the last third would be compelled to accept baptism has alone remained unfulfilled. The provision that a Jew who consents

to be baptized ceases in the eyes of the law to be a Jew has led some despairing Jewish students to seek relief from disabilities in an insincere apostasy. But the stubborn religious faith of the masses has remained unbroken under oppression, and the Russian Jew has preferred massacre or enforced emigration to the abjuration of his creed.

## II.—THE ALIEN IMMIGRANT.

Although the Russian Jews have been forced to leave their country in large numbers, only a small minority of the refugees become permanent settlers in this country, and their number is a declining one. In the evidence recently given by Mr. Haldane Porter, H.M. Inspector under the Aliens Act, before the Departmental Committee on Receiving Houses, it was stated that the number of Russians entering the Port of London had decreased from 7,626 in the year 1906 to 2,264 in 1909, and to 1,136 in the first six months of 1910. Indeed, the influx of aliens of all nationalities into London has been on a very unimportant scale; for while the Census of 1901 showed the foreign population of the metropolis was 136,000, the figure at the present moment is put by the anti-alien Press at 150,000—an increase of 1,500 a year during the last decade. If we take the whole foreign population of the country, we find that the last report of H.M. Inspector under the Act estimated that in 1909 there was an excess of arrivals over departures of about 7,000; but, deducting from this figure the deaths of foreigners, it is obvious that the increase of the foreign population during the year was entirely negligible —especially in a country with a population increasing naturally at the rate of over half a million a year.

On mere grounds of numbers, then, there is no call for drastic legislation against aliens. Is there anything in the character of the aliens that would justify such legislation?

The alien is charged with criminal tendencies. But the last Report of H.M. Inspector shows that in the year 1909, out of 262,284 convicted persons in prison throughout the country, only 517 were of the nationalities (Russians or Poles) mainly affected by the inspection clauses of the Aliens Act. The Warden of Toynbee (Mr. T. E. Harvey, M.P.) recently wrote in *The Toynbee Herald:* "Not only are they (the aliens) in general law-abiding and peace-loving folk, proud of the liberty which England has given them, and grateful for the toleration they have failed to find elsewhere, but the part of London in which they live is actually freer from crimes of violence and risk of theft than are other districts where there is no appreciable proportion of aliens. . . . The gradual increase of foreign-born inhabitants in Whitechapel has been accompanied by a steady decrease of breaches of the law." It is worth noting that from the year 1904 to the year 1909 the proportion of foreigners among convicted male prisoners has fallen from 25 to 14 per 1,000, and among females from 16 to 7 per 1,000. The proportion of adult criminal males to the total population is 14 per 1,000, and of females 8 per 1,000, so that the aliens show a less total percentage of crime than the general population.

Much is also heard as to the pauperism of the alien immigrant. But it must be remembered that the ratio of pauperism among aliens in London has never been higher than one-third that of the general population (2·4 per cent. of the aliens, against 7·9 per cent. of the general population), and the last Report of H.M. Inspector (July, 1910) showed that in the whole of the country, out of a total of 677 alien vagrants, only 28 were Russians or Poles.

A very common charge made against the alien is that he displaces the native working man. So far from that being the case the actual contrary is the exact truth, and

many thousands of Englishmen are in employment in the factory or workshop, at the desk, on the road, or in the market-place, because of the asylum granted to alien immigrants. It is not necessary to go farther for confirmation of this than the Report of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. That Commission found as a fact that the immigration of aliens has produced no effect upon the numbers of unemployed; and that there had, indeed, been a general tendency to an increase of wages in the trades affected by them. The Commission also found that "the development of the three main industries—tailoring, cabinet-making, and shoemaking—in which the aliens engage has undoubtedly been beneficial in various ways: it has increased the demand for the manufacture of not only goods made in this country which were commonly made abroad, but of the materials used in them, thus indirectly giving employment to native workers."

It has often been asserted that large numbers of the native population of the Borough of Stepney, round which the anti-alien agitation has centred, have been displaced from their dwellings by the aliens who have settled in their midst. Any displacement that has taken place refers in a very great degree to the old, worn-out, obsolete houses formerly occupied by the native population. The housing needs of the immigrants have been largely supplied by the erection of new up-to-date dwellings, accommodating many hundreds of families, and also of houses with workshops attached, where the various trades could be carried on under the most sanitary conditions. These modern buildings were referred to by Mr. Evans, the Government Factory Inspector, in his evidence before the Alien Commission as being "models in every respect." The erection of these new buildings naturally provided a large amount of work for English workmen, using an enormous amount of English material and English capital. A sum of approxi-

mately one million pounds was, in a very few years, devoted to this purpose.

These industrial developments brought about an enormous increase in the rateable value of the district, so much so, in fact, that in very many cases the rates arising from the new properties were eight or ten times as much as those which were formerly derived from the old demolished premises. The Four Per Cent. Dwellings Co., an essentially Jewish enterprise, of which Lord Rothschild is Chairman, have erected large numbers of modern dwellings, not only in Stepney, but in various other districts; and in connection with these works many streets in the East End, formerly occupied by a notoriously criminal class, are now inhabited by a most respectable class of tenant, the character of the whole district having been changed for the better. As a matter of fact, there are, at the moment, a large number of empty houses and business premises in the East End, resulting in very heavy loss to the rates, and any strengthening of the Aliens Act would aggravate this serious difficulty.

It is also sometimes urged that the immigrant is weak and sickly, and therefore an undesirable addition to the population. As to this, Dr. Herbert Williams, Medical Officer of Health of the Port of London, told the Alien Commission that the health of the immigrant was " fairly good " ; while Mr. Hawkey, Examining Officer of Customs, mentioned that it had very seldom occurred that he had known a case of illness, but that he had found the immigrants generally in good health and free from physical defect. It is alleged that the immigrant imports into the country a contagious eye-disease called trachoma. But the Alien Commission found that the disease, which is found in the ranks of poor children generally, did not exist, to an exceptional extent, amongst the alien children, and that no instance was alleged of the disease being communicated by them to others.

## III.—THE ALIEN AS CITIZEN.

On the other hand, the aliens possess qualities which make them admirable material for British citizenship. There is no more loyal citizen in the United Kingdom than the Jewish immigrant. This is due partly to the sense of gratitude which fills him when he contrasts the conditions and opportunities—social, political, and economic—of which he may avail himself freely in this country, according to his merits, to the conditions and opportunities he or his ancestors have endured under other flags. Partly also it is due to the innate love of order and law, a temperamental desire not only not to transgress, but actively to obey the law and custom of the country he resides in, which he has acquired from generations of positive obedience to a strict legal and social code of his own. There are over 1,700 Jews in the Army, Navy, and Territorial forces, of whom 152 bear His Majesty's Commission as officers. Of these quite three-fourths are immigrants themselves, or of alien parentage. In the last South African War as many as 3,000 Jews fought with the British forces, of whom 2,600 went from the United Kingdom, and the remainder from the Colonies. One hundred and nineteen fell in defence of the Empire.

The prowess of the Jewish citizen has been shown not only on the battlefield, but also—and even more effectively —in the more peaceful fields of commerce and industry. The Jew has conquered the foreigner at home and abroad. In certain articles the British market was formerly supplied by foreign countries, notably Germany. In many cases Jewish citizens have built up a British industry whose products have effectively displaced the German product and added to the economic stability of the working classes of the country. In other cases the Jewish citizens have developed new industries whose products have been exported in annually increasing volume to foreign countries, displacing

in some instances the products of a local industry or of another foreign competitor. Here, again, the industrial power of the nation has benefited. Jews have also been responsible for the improvement in organisation of many established industries which now give employment to ten or a hundred times the former number of workpeople. In every department of our complex industrial activities the influence of the Jew has been considerable and to the general advantage of the community.

The alien Jew's passion for the proper education of his children is proverbial. The attendance in Jewish voluntary and Council schools is conspicuously good. The physique of the Jewish children compares most favourably with that of other school children, and the zeal and ability of the children of aliens are strikingly exemplified by the large percentage of county scholarships which are annually awarded to them. The Alien Commission itself stated that the aliens "send their children regularly to school, and are rewarded by the quickness with which these children acquire knowledge and the number of prizes gained by them." The London *Evening News* of February 24th last stated: "In the boroughs of London, where the greater part of the alien and Jewish population live, the children of the strangers within our gates have swept the board of the junior scholarshipsa warded by the London County Council. . . . The reasons for their success seem to be found in the fact that the parents appreciate the value of education, and send their children regularly to school, in almost every case well fed and clothed. The children, on the other hand, seem imbued with the spirit of ambition and perseverance, and learn very quickly. They are sharp, attentive, and treat their school life quite seriously."

Equally undeniable is it that the alien is sober, industrious, and hard-working in an exceptional degree. He is devoted to his family, and he has anticipated the most advanced

social and economic legislation by taking care that his wife shall rarely be sent out to work. The Archbishop of York (who was till recently Bishop of Stepney) stated, at a meeting of the Church of England Men's Society at Chester in January, that he "knew no steadier, better-conducted, or more hard-working race of people than the Jewish aliens in London."

Is it to be contended that mere difference of racial origin is to make men endowed with these high qualities undesirable for British citizenship? The energies of our statesmen and social reformers are bent, at the present moment, on the cultivation of these very qualities in the general population, and their efforts in this direction are likely to be materially assisted, and not hampered, by the splendid example of the aliens who seek refuge from oppression on the hospitable British shores.

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